

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please cancel claim 18.

REMARKS

Claim 18 has been canceled, the title has been amended, and a new abstract has been submitted. Reexamination and reconsideration of the pending claims 1, 4-6, 9-12, 14-17, and 35-44 is respectfully requested in view of the foregoing amendments and accompanying remarks.

Applicants gratefully acknowledge the indication by the Examiner that claim 44 is allowed and claims 14 and 41 would be allowable if rewritten in independent format. However, it is deemed premature at this time to make the suggested amendments, prior to further consideration of the remaining pending claims by the Examiner.

Applicants acknowledge the withdrawal from further consideration of non-elected claims 19-34, and note that those claims have in fact been canceled pending the possible filing of a divisional application. However, the withdrawal from consideration of claims 6, 10-12, 15, 35, 36, and 42 is not at all understood. No species election requirement is of record in the application and Applicants accordingly have not elected a species for examination. The Examiner is therefore respectfully requested to reconsider his position, and if he continues to believe that a species election is of record, to clarify same in his next Office Action.

The objection to the drawings is acknowledged, but is believed to have been mooted by the accompanying cancellation of claim 18.

The abstract and title have been amended to address the Examiner's objections.

Claim 18 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, first paragraph, and the specification is objected to under 37 CFR 1.71. These rejections and objections are


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obviated by the cancellation of claim 18 as well.

Claims 1, 4, 5, 9, 16, 17, 37-40, and 43 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Komiya '576 in view of Isse '262. It is noted at the outset that the Komiya '576 patent was made of record by Applicants in the Information Disclosure Statement filed on May 19, 1997, receipt of which was acknowledged by the Patent & Trademark Office on a return receipt postcard submitted with that filing. A copy of that postcard is attached. The Examiner acknowledged his review of the two later-filed supplemental Information Disclosure Statements, but failed to return initialed copies of the originally filed four sheets of Form PTO-1449. He is respectfully requested to return those initialed sheets with his next Office Action. A copy of that submittal, which meets all PTO requirements for consideration, accompanies this filing for his convenience.

The patent to Isse '262 was filed on June 7, 1995, and is a continuation-in-part of Application Serial No. 318,196 filed on October 5, 1994. The present application was filed on May 19, 1997, and is a continuation application filed under Rule 60 of earlier filed Application Serial No. 08/308,097, filed on September 16, 1994. Therefore, it is clear that the Isse '262 patent is not prior art to the present application and the rejection of record based thereupon is thus improper and should be withdrawn.

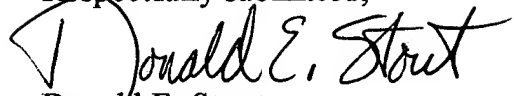
In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicants respectfully submit that the application is in condition for allowance, and early notification of same is



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earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,


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CERTIFICATE OF MAILING

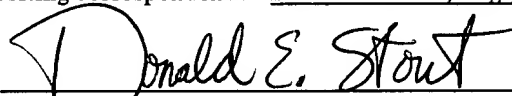
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on Monday, January 4, 1999

Person depositing correspondence: Donald E. Stout, Reg. No. 34,493

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